

And lastly, does reason afford any grounds for a practice that is in contradiction to Holy Scripture and antiquity?

In 1858, a memorial was signed by 507 Roman Catholic clergy in Bohemia, to the Archbishop of Vienna, in which the following passages occur:—"We must not conceal that the deadliest blow of all has been given to clerical influence by the doubt, now almost universally entertained, of the morality of the priests. The now gigantically-increasing immorality of all orders of society is frequently justified by reference to the notorious lives of their spiritual guides."

Is this to be wondered at, when Cardinal Bellarmine writes: "It is a greater evil for a priest to marry than to commit fornication"?

Let not man be wiser than God; and above all, let not the Church of the nineteenth century impose a yoke upon her clergy which is alike contrary to Holy Scripture, to antiquity, and to human nature.

I am, &c. &c.

CATHOLICUS.

*To His Excellency, &c. &c.*

#### A VISIT TO THE ARMENIAN-ROMANIST CONVENT AT VENICE.

- [We are indebted to an English clergyman for the following account of a visit he lately paid to the Armenian Convent at Venice.]

"May 27.—After an uncomfortable night, and a very rough passage, the vessel rolling most disagreeably, which a month ago would have made us cast our insides out, but now, I am thankful to say, took no effect on us, we arrived at Venice about seven. We proceeded to the Hotel Royal Danielli, which seems very good and English, and immediately after breakfast engaged a commissioner, and went to St. Mark's, a very gorgeous Byzantine structure, erected A.D. 996, by people from Constantinople. Its gilding, frescoes, mosaics, &c., render it very striking, but it hardly comes up to our expectation in point of size. The Square of St. Mark, however, satisfied us in every respect. It has been characterised as 'rich, venerable, and magnificent,' epithets which it truly deserves. We afterwards took a gondola to the Armenian convent on the Isle of St. Lazzaro, about a mile to the south of the city. This is the most delightful mode of passing about that can be conceived. You sit or recline quite at your ease, protected by a canopy from sun or rain, or, if there be no chance of either, exposed to the pleasant breeze. The gondolas are flat-bottomed, and not allowed to be more than seven inches in the water, and by a law of the late republic, made to put a stop to the extravagance of which families were guilty in their decorations, as well as to the quarrels which their rivalry in this particular sometimes occasioned, the canopies must be black, which gives the little vessels almost the appearance of water hearses.

The Armenians, as a nation, became separated from the Church Catholic in consequence of their refusal to receive the decision of the Council of Chalcedon, held in 451, against the heresy of Eutyches, who taught that there was but one nature in our Saviour, the human being lost in the divine. In a conference, however, held with the Orthodox Greeks



in 1170, the Armenians, while they admitted that they held one incarnate nature in Christ, declared it to be not by confusion, like Eutyches, nor by diminution, like Apollinaris, who taught that the Divine Nature supplied in Him the place of a human soul; but according to the orthodox sense of St. Cyril of Alexandria, in his book against Nestorius. Some ages after, however, when the great schism between the East and West had long taken place, they entered into several negotiations with the Roman See, with a view to being received into its Communion; but these appear to have been chiefly occasioned by their political necessities, in order to obtain from the Pope such temporal succour as he could afford amid the desolation by which the East was then overrun. In 1318 he sent them an Archbishop, who has had successors, always of the Dominican order, to the present day, to whose Communion some have attached themselves; but the great body of the people seem to have adhered to their original Church and native pastors. However, even amongst those who are in connexion with Rome, the Armenian rites and offices are still in use. This convent was founded by one of these Romano-Armenians, Mékhitar, born at Sebaste, in 1676, who received minor Orders at the convent of the Holy Cross in that city at the age of nine, took the religious habit and was ordained deacon when only fifteen, and priest when twenty. He became a man of great learning and holiness, and withal great Roman zeal, and being anxious to promote both the intellectual and spiritual advancement of his nation, in 1700 attempted, with a few disciples, to form for their benefit a literary institution under monastic rule, at Pera, a suburb of Constantinople. They soon found, however, that this was not a place of sufficient retirement and quietness for their purpose, and so removed in 1703 to Modon, in the Morea, where, by the liberal assistance of the Venetian authorities, they built a convent and established their Society of Mékhitarists, according to the rule of St. Benedict, for which they obtained the Pope's sanction. Here things went on prosperously with them for about twelve years, when in consequence of the invasion of the Morea by the Turks, they again removed to Venice. Here Mékhitar obtained from the Senate, in 1717, a grant of the Isle of St. Lazzaro, whereon were some old and deserted buildings, originally erected as a Lazzaretto, for the relief of persons who returned from the East afflicted with leprosy, and afterwards, on the cessation of that malady, used as an asylum for beggars; but being found unfit for this purpose on account of its distance from the city, it was abandoned. Here, then, Mékhitar and his associates, considered, however, by the Venetian republic as subjects of the Porte, established themselves, the old buildings at first being simply rendered habitable; but at length, in 1740, the whole convent, with the exception of the church, which underwent a thorough restoration, was rebuilt under the sole architectural direction of Mékhitar. He died nine years after, at the age of seventy-four. In his office of Abbot he has had four successors, the last two of whom have been invested with the dignity of Archbishop *in partibus*.

It was the great object of the founder, and he wished it to be that of his community, to disseminate the principles of the Roman Communion amongst his countrymen. For this purpose he caused works to be trans-



lated into Armenian, and printed, especially vindicating the points on which the Church of Rome differs from that of Armenia, such as the existence of the two natures in our Lord, the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff, the impossibility of salvation out of the Roman Obedience, and the practice of Communion in one kind. Some members of the Order are trained as Missionaries to propagate these principles amongst their countrymen in Armenia, Transylvania, the Crimea, and at Constantinople.

The Society of course cultivate the study of theology, but they by no means confine themselves to it. They have done much towards rendering the knowledge of their own language accessible to Europeans, by the preparation and publication of various grammars and dictionaries. They have composed and translated various works of science and literature for the benefit of their own countrymen, in the list of which I find from the English, Goldsmith's 'Abridgment of Roman History,' Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' Young's 'Night Thoughts,' and a selection from Lord Byron's Poems. The present Archiepiscopal Abbot, Monsignor Georges Hurmuz, has translated Virgil's 'Æneid' and 'Eclogues,' and also composed a poem, entitled 'The Gardens,' in four cantos. His predecessor, Monsignor Sukias de Somal, published a valuable work in Italian, called 'A Picture of Armenian Literature.' There are five printing-presses in the convent, from which these works are published. The compositors employed are Italians, who are simply taught to read the Armenian characters, but the proof-sheets are all corrected by the Fathers.

Besides being thus engaged in study, writing, translating, and publishing, they also conduct the education of a number of Armenian boys, who are supported at the expense of the convent, provided with a uniform of black cloth, and should they in the course of their studies find themselves unwilling to embrace the monastic life, they are sent back to their own country. They are taught reading, writing, Armenian ancient and modern, Italian, and the elements of history, especially that of their own nation. This course usually occupies them till they are seventeen years of age.

They then put on the habit of the Order (simply a black cassock), and pass to the second course, which lasts two years, and includes rhetoric, Latin, French, and the exact sciences. When this is completed, they are admitted, after various trials and examinations, to make their religious profession, after which they continue, commonly for six years, their former studies, with the addition of Greek and some Oriental languages, and then, for four years more, pass through various courses of philosophy and theology. At this period they are ordained priests, and take the title of Father. Each one, however, continues his studies, and also receives from the Abbot some office connected with the convent; for, with the exception of menial duties, which are left to the servants and lay-brothers, all others are discharged by the Fathers. After some years, on passing the requisite examination, they may receive the degree of *Vartabed*, or Doctor, which is conferred by the Abbot with great ceremony. Every Father is usually invested with it before he is sent out on Mission.

They assemble in church for their offices three times a day, viz. at five, twelve, and three. Mass is also said by one or other of the Fathers,



throughout the morning. The boys, however, are not expected to be present at the early service. They have a slight breakfast, dine in the refectory at half-past twelve, and sup at eight.

The convent is a sweet place, well provided with library, refectory, classrooms, private apartments, &c., as well as with grounds and garden, and enjoying delightful views. Every one has a small room to himself, and there are in the same enclosure separate quarters for the boys, the novices, the young Fathers, the men of mature years, and the old men. The Abbot occupies three modest apartments opening into each other. There are about twenty priests in the convent and ten clerks. Their physiognomy is decidedly rational, somewhat sallow and thin, but by no means unpleasing. We were kindly conducted over the place by a gentlemanly young monk, who conversed with us in French.

The chapel is small, neat, and handsomely furnished, but by its various altars betrays its connexion with the Latin Communion. The service was the most magnificent I ever witnessed. The Archbishop, a thin, spare man, apparently about fifty-five, who was the celebrant, was attended by six or seven deacons, and about a dozen other ecclesiastics and choir boys, who were attired, some in yellow, and others in deep pink, loose albs, with small embroidered crosses on the backs, borders and false hoods, to which the deacons added stoles resting on the left shoulder and fastened below the right arm. The Archbishop, on his entrance, wore what I took to be his usual dress—a violet cloak and skull cap—but having retired to the sacristy came forth in his mitre and costly archiepiscopal cope, which, however, he laid aside before the consecration, and took the habit of a simple priest—a plainer, but still rich, cope, and neither mitre nor cap. Whilst he was making this change, the great curtain was drawn, which divided the sanctuary, containing himself and the deacons, from the rest of the church, as it had been previously whilst they were preparing the bread and wine, and removing them from the credence to the altar; and as it was afterwards, towards the end of the Mass, when he again put on his episcopal vestments. Whilst he was communicating himself, the little curtain was drawn, which merely enclosed the altar. The whole service was sung, chanted, or intoned, sometimes by the celebrant, sometimes by the deacon, and sometimes by the choir; and the *flabella*, or pieces of metal hung with little bells and fastened to the points of spears, were frequently vibrated, to signify the sound occasioned by the waving of angels' wings. Various postures were adopted by those concerned in the service—at one time they stood, at another they knelt, and again at another they almost prostrated themselves—but everything was done with the greatest order, decorum, and reverence, and I do not remember to have been ever so impressed with a service before. At its conclusion we were invited, by the monk who had shown us the convent, to partake of the blessed bread, and did so, happy to testify our willingness to be in communion with every portion of the Church; though were it not for the Monophysite opinion prevalent among the Armenians, one could feel but little sympathy with a society whose main object it is to withdraw them from the communion of their own bishops; and even as it is, those amongst them who become convinced of the error of that opinion, should rather acknowledge the

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jurisdiction of the Orthodox Eastern Patriarch, whose spiritual subjects they properly are, than unite themselves with pastors intruded amongst them by the Roman Pontiff, in a country where he has no rightful authority. When the Mass was over, we saw the Archbishop, in his ordinary dress, administer confirmation in the sacristy, for the Patriarch of Venice, who was ill. He used the Latin words at the imposition of hands and the anointing, but the rest of the office was in Armenian."

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### Colonial, Foreign, and Home News.

#### SUMMARY.

ON March 25th, the Feast of the Annunciation, the Rev. M. THOMAS was consecrated, in Canterbury Cathedral, first Bishop of the new diocese of GOULBURN, which will embrace the southern portion of that of Sydney. The Archbishop of Canterbury was assisted by the Bishops of Sydney, Worcester and Melbourne. The sermon was preached by Dean Alford.

A letter, signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and their suffragans, by the Irish Bishops, and by several Colonial prelates, has been addressed to Bishop COLenso, pointing out to him the inconsistency and evil of his retaining his present office whilst he publicly admits that he dissents from the faith of the Church and cannot reconcile his opinions to the ordinances of the English Prayer-Book. Bishop COLenso declines to resign, and announces his intention of speedily returning to Natal.

We regret that Bishop NIXON, of TASMANIA, who came on a visit to this country last year, is compelled, by the failure of his health, to abandon all thought of returning to administer his diocese.

The Rev. J. W. WILLIAMS, Rector of the Junior Department in Bishop's College, Lennoxville, has been elected, after eleven ballots, successor to Dr. Mountain in the Bishopric of QUEBEC. The election is a very satisfactory one.

The New York *Church Journal* gives the following notice of Bishop POLK in St. Philip's Church, Harrodsburg, Kentucky: "A person on the spot writes to a friend thus:—'Bishop POLK visited St. Philip's, as all other places of worship, to see their suitableness for hospitals. When he entered he took off his sword, ascended the chancel, and fervently prayed God for peace, and to give the people right minds, with loud *Amens* in response from all present. He was not robed. He said *that building was suitable to worship God in, and nothing else.*'"

The Thirty-first Conference of the Bengal Church Missionaries was held at CALCUTTA on October 24, 1862, and the two following days. Among other points under consideration was the very important one—the occupation of new stations. The Missionaries have addressed an earnest appeal home for an increase of the staff of Missionaries in BENGAL. "Numberless localities," they say, "might be occupied with advantage; but the strength of the Missionaries is much diminished, and scarcely suffices to fill the stations long since established. The brethren